

Abstract

A shared storage distributed file system is presented that provides applications with transparent access to a storage area network (SAN) attached storage device. This is accomplished by providing clients read access to the devices over the SAN and by requiring most write activity to be serialized through a network attached storage (NAS) server. Both the clients and the NAS server are connected to the SAN-attached device over the SAN. Direct read access to the SAN attached device is provided through a local file system on the client. Write access is provided through a remote file system on the client that utilizes the NAS server. A supplemental read path is provided through the NAS server for those circumstances where the local file system is unable to provide valid data reads.

Consistency is maintained by comparing modification times in the local and remote file systems. Since writes occur over the remote file systems, the consistency mechanism is capable of flushing data caches in the remote file system, and invalidating metadata and real-data caches in the local file system. It is possible to utilize unmodified local and remote file systems in the present invention, by layering over the local and remote file systems a new file system. This new file system need only be installed at each client, allowing the NAS server file systems to operate unmodified. Alternatively, the new file system can be combined with the local file system.